

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-11 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 EB-07 DHA-02 ORM-02 AID-05 IGA-02 COME-00

TRSE-00 FDRE-00 /094 W
----- 031354

R 161245Z MAR 76
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7765
INFO AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMDASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY MASERU
AMEMBASSY MBABANE
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, BC, RH, SREF

SUBJECT: BOTSWANA CONCERNS REGARDING REFUGEES

REF: GABORONE 342

1. ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY TO THE PRESIDENT, LEBANG MPOTOKWANE,
HAS RAISED QUESTION OF REFUGEES WITH CHARGE ALONG LINES SIMILAR TO
PARA 4 REFTEL. MPOTOKWANE SAID HE HAS ALREADY WRITTEN TO THE BRITISH
HIGH COMMISSION, UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, AND THE
RED CROSS ON THE SAME SUBJECT. ESSENTIALLY, BOTSWANA CONSIDERS
IT VERY LIKELY THAT A LARGE INFLUX OF REFUGEES WILL OCCUR AS A RESULT
OF FIGHTING IN RHODESIA AND THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT FEEL
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EQUIPPED TO COPE WITH THE PROBLEM. HE ALSO EXPECTS TO MAKE SIMILAR

REQUEST TO SWEDISH AND NORWEGIAN GOVERNMENTS.

2. MPOTOKWANE HAS FOLLOWED UP CONVERSATION WITH A LETTER AS FOLLOWS:

QTE I AM WRITING TO CONFIRM OUR CONVERSATION OF WEDNESDAY EVENING REGARDING THE LIKELIHOOD OF A LARGE INFLUX OF REFUGEES INTO BOTSWANA AS A RESULT OF THE FIGHTING IN RHODESIA.

QTE IT IS, OF COURSE, VERY DIFFICULT AT THIS STAGE TO ESTIMATE HOW MANY REFUGEES ARE LIKELY TO COME HERE AS THE FIGHTING IN RHODESIA INTENSIFIES AND SPREADS. BUT I THINK THE REFUGEES WILL COME IN LARGE NUMBERS - PROBABLY IN THOUSANDS RATHER THAN HUNDREDS.

QTE OUR MAJOR CONCERN ABOUT THIS PROSPECT IS THAT WE ARE INADEQUATELY EQUIPPED TO HANDLE THE PROBLEM ON OUR OWN. IN VIEW OF THIS, WE APPEAL TO THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO GIVE US ANY ASSISTANCE TO ENABLE US TO COPE WITH THIS PROBLEM WHEN IT DOES ARISE.

QTE AS YOU PROBABLY ALREADY KNOW, THERE IS NOW AN ACCOMMODATION CENTRE FOR REFUGEES AT FRANCISTOWN. BUT THE CENTRE WILL BE INADEQUATE FOR THE SCALE OF REFUGEE INFLUX WHICH WE ENVISAGE IN THE COMING MONTHS. WE MAY, THEREFORE, NEED TO ESTABLISH A SECOND AND MUCH LARGER ACCOMMODATION CENTRE. IN ADDITION WE SHALL REQUIRE FUNDS TO BUY FOOD, SOAP, BEDDING AND OTHER ESSENTIALS FOR THE REFUGEES.

QTE AS I SAID EARLIER, WE CANNOT, ON OUR OWN, COPE WITH A REFUGEE PROBLEM OF THE MAGNITUDE WE ENVISAGE. WE JUST COULD NOT AFFORD IT. WE THEREFORE HOPE VERY MUCH THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT WILL FEEL ABLE TO ASSIST US IN THIS REGARD UNQUOTE.

3. COMMENT: BASED ON CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR REFTEL AND THIS MORE FORMAL APPROACH, WE SHOULD EXPECT SPECIFIC REQUEST FROM GOB IN THE EVENT OF LARGE-SCALE REFUGEE MOVEMENT PREDICTED BY MPOTOKWANE.

THOMSEN

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Remarks:
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